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## Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, a Senator from the State of Rhode Island.

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, before Whom the lives of all are exposed and the desires of all known, be at work in our lives. Wipe away selfish interests so that we may perfectly love and truly serve You. Lord, give our lawmakers courage as they face today's challenges, providing them with the necessary skill to perform their duties and accomplish Your purposes. Give them the wisdom to refuse to sow to the wind, thereby risking reaping the whirlwind. May they find joy in both serving and loving You. We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, a Senator from the State of Rhode Island, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, December 27, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable SHELDON WHITEHOUSE,

a Senator from the State of Rhode Island, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

### THE FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. REID. Mr. President, New Years Eve is fast approaching and for decades and decades the American people have watched the ball drop in Times Square. It is the countdown to midnight, the start of a new year.

This year the American people are waiting for the ball to drop, but it is not going to be a good drop because Americans' taxes are moving in the wrong direction. Come the first of this year, Americans will have less income than they have today if we go over the cliff—and it looks as if that is where we are headed. The House of Representatives as we speak, with 4 days left after today to the 1st of the year, is not here, with the Speaker having told them he will give them 48 hours' notice. I can't imagine their consciences. They are out wherever they are around the country and we are here, trying to get something done.

They are not in Washington, DC. The House of Representatives is not here. They could not even get the Republican leadership together yesterday. They had to do it with a teleconference.

If we go over the cliff, we will be left with the knowledge it could have been prevented with a single vote in the Republican-controlled House of Representatives. Prior to this session starting today, the Presiding Officer

and I had a conversation about how things have changed around here. I served in the House of Representatives. There are 435 Members of the House. What goes on in this country should not be decided by the majority, it should be decided by the whole House of Representatives. Everyone, including the Speaker of the House of Representatives, knows that if they had brought up the Senate-passed bill that would give relief to everyone making less than \$250,000 a year, it would pass overwhelmingly. Every Democrat would vote for it and Republicans would vote for it. But the Speaker, he says: No; we cannot do that. It has to be a majority of the majority. So we have done nothing.

He even tried to bring up the bill last week to show they could defeat it. They could not do that even. They could not defeat the bill that passed in the Senate.

I don't think the American people understand the House of Representatives is not operating as a House of Representatives. It is being operated with a dictatorship of the Speaker not allowing the vast majority of the House of Representatives to get what they want. If the \$250,000 threshold would be brought up, it would pass overwhelmingly, I repeat.

On any given day for the last 5 or 6 months, since July 25, Speaker BOEHNER could have brought the Senate-passed middle-class tax cut legislation to a vote in the House and it would have passed. But he has made the decision he is not letting us have a vote on that because if he let it be voted upon, it would pass. I have said it is not too late for the Speaker to take up the Senate-passed bill, but even that time is winding down. Today is Thursday. He is going to give 48 hours' notice to the House before they come back. So 48 hours from today is Saturday. With just that one vote, middle-class families would have the security that taxes would not go up by at least \$2,200 on

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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